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Get Q at the drive-thru

Canyon Country's The Q Spot BBQ & Shrimp Co. brings you Texas-style barbecue at the window

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much of the southern United States, but the concept hasn't caught on in California. Until now.

Cue in The Q Spot BBQ & Shrimp Co. in Canyon Country, a small, clean drive-thru and sit-down restaurant (with six indoor/outdoor tables) that offers a convenient way to indulge your carnivorous cravings. Owners and spouses Eric and Niecola Roberts opened The Q Spot on July 1, with the intention of providing quick, tasty, authentic Texas barbecue to families such as theirs.

"We have three children under the age of 10 and we shy away from restaurants because of them," said Niecola Roberts. "We wanted to give families options to come in and sit down or to pick up some food and take it home. So far, the community has really embraced us."

It's no wonder why. Besides providing just about the friendliest service on the planet (The Roberts have trained their staff to exemplify southern hospitality), The Q Spot offers real deal, slow-smoked, dry-rubbed Texas barbecue. Everything from pork butt to spare ribs to catfish is hand-rubbed with a secret 21-ingredient blend created by Eric Roberts called "The Bam" ("It would take the FBI to get the recipe out of him," Niecola Roberts said), then placed into the smoker, affectionately named Freddy, for up to 13 hours.

The result is falling-off-the-bone meat infused with a mouth-watering, savory smokiness. Meaty beef ribs (\$4.98 a la carte or \$9.98 as part of the Daddy's Plate, which is served with two sides and a slab of sweet bread) are just that, prehistorically massive, extremely satisfying and loaded with bits of marbled back fat. The pork ribs (\$3.99 a la carte or \$8.99 as part of the Daddy's Plate) are far from the dainty baby backs found in most barbecue restaurants, but rather a juicy spare rib with a rich heady essence.

There's no sauce on these ribs or any of the meats at The Q Spot, which they proudly advertise.

"Saucy barbecue originates from Louisiana and Kansas City, where the meats are mopped while cooking, after cooking, and before they are eaten. Later on I was introduced to Texas-style barbecue, which is the dry rub," said Eric Roberts, who hails from Wichita Falls, Texas, outside of Dallas.

"People look at us like, 'Where's the sauce?' Traditionally, in Texas, it's served on the side. It's there if you want it," Niecola Roberts said.

The sauce at The Q Spot is good, a darkish reddish amber concoction tinged with sweetness and a little warmth, but honestly, the Roberts are right, the meat doesn't need any enhancement.

Sides are also something to celebrate. The mac & cheese has just the right balance of cheese, pasta, and pepper. Collard greens are simmered in a flavorful mix of chicken stock and spices until silky; the pot likker, or leftover broth, is good enough to drink.

"We didn't know how collard greens were going to go over in Canyon Country, but a lot of people here have southern roots. Canyon Country loves their collard greens," Niecola Roberts said with a smile.

Q Spot's tortellini pasta salad has a unique Italian flair for a barbecue place, but the refreshing, vinegary sauce makes a pleasant contrast to the meat's richness. A dense little slab of sweet cake, or corn bread, is another nice way to round things out.

Named after various Roberts family members, there are plates for every palate. Mama's Plate features smothered pork rib

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Sister's Plate offers a hefty serving of smoky, succulent dark meat chicken for \$7.99 and there's an Aunt Dee's Plate with farm-raised catfish for \$11.99.

"Aunt Dee's Plate is a good option for someone who wants an alternative to pork, chicken or beef but is tired of salads," Niecola Roberts said.

"We know California people are health-conscious and think that barbecue or soul food may not be as healthy as some others, but when you put meat on a smoker for a long time, it tends to lose its fatty parts," Eric Roberts said.

Spicy pork hot links or sweet chicken links are served on a bun for \$5.99, as is pulled chicken, beef or pork at \$7.99. For the kids, there's a Little Buckeroos menu with a lunch sack of four meatballs or one chicken leg, a side, drink and toy for \$3.99 or a beef or pork rib with a side, drink and toy for \$4.99.

"This is just great food for social moms and dads with busy lives," Eric Roberts said.

Actually, it's great food for just about everyone.

The Q Spot BBQ & Shrimp Co. is located at 18540 Via Princessa, Canyon Country (across from Costco). Free delivery available with minimum order; outside catering also available. Open Sunday-Thursday, 11 a.m. - 9 p.m., Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m. - 11 p.m.; (661) 299-4807 or www.TheQSpotBBQ.com.



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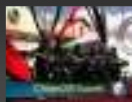
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